

# **Game Management Plan 2015-21 Update**

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# Purpose of the Plan

- Encourages the public to help define the major issues for WDFW in terms of game management
- Guides Three Year Hunting Season Development
- Drives Division Priorities for the Commission and Legislature
- Guides Work Plan Priorities for HQ/Regional/Field Staff

# Major Issues from Past and Current Plans

- Private Lands Access for Recreation
- Wildlife Conflict
- Communication
- Tribal Coordination
- Predator/Prey Relationships
- Hunter Ethics
  - Non-toxic ammunition
  - Baiting
- Wolf Management



# GMP 2015-21 Process

- Scoping – Dec 12 to Jan 3rd – 8057 participated
- Survey of the General Public – May 20
- Comment on Draft GMP – June 9 to July 22 - 1689 participated
- Six Public Meetings - June 17 to 26
- Commission Briefing and Hearing – Aug 8 & 9
- Survey of the Hunters – August 26
- Revising the Key Plan Elements based on Public Comment – October 15
- Public Comment on the Revised Plan October 15 to November 21
- Commission Adoption – December 12 & 13

# 2015-21 Scoping Results

- Predator – Prey
- Wolves
- Recruit, Retain, Reactivate Hunters
- Non-toxic Ammunition
- Hunter Access
- Wildlife Conflict
- Disease – Elk Hoof Disease
- Ethics: Baiting & Equipment Technology



# 2015-21 General Public Opinion Survey Results

## Responsive Management - Telephone Survey

- Support for hunting
- Wildlife Conflict
- Predator Management
- Wolf Management
- Hunter Recruitment/  
Participation



# General Public Opinion Survey

- The majority of Washington Residents support hunting – 2014 88%
- Over a quarter of Washington Citizens reported having a conflict w/wildlife in the past two years (29%)
- Strong support (70%) for maintaining sustainable predator populations
- Strong support (71%) for reducing predator populations to increase suppressed deer or elk herds

# General Public Opinion Survey

- There is good support for wolf recovery (64% support vs 27% oppose)
- There is even better support for delisting wolves once they meet recovery objectives (73% vs 15%)
- Lethal control to protect livestock (63% vs 28%)
- Lethal control to protect ungulates (55% vs 32%)



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# General Public Opinion Survey

- Hunting Wolves after recovery:
  - Support establishing a hunting season (63% vs 28%)
  - To maintain wolf population objectives (69% vs 23%)
  - To provide recreation (38% vs 53%)
- A third of Washington residents (35%) reported hunting at some time in their lives



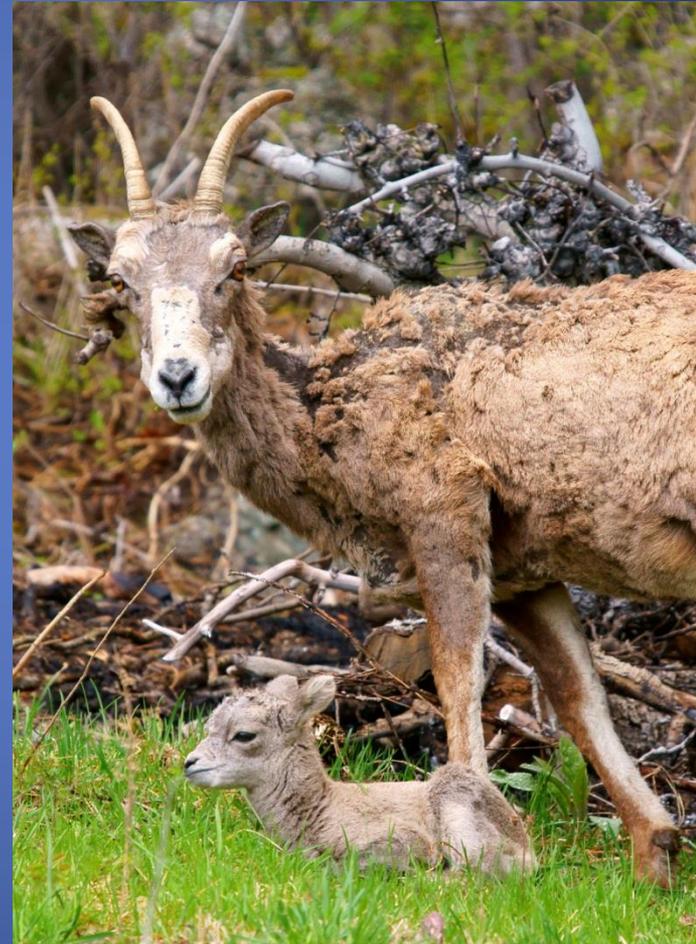
# Comments Received on 2015-21 Draft Plan

- We received 1689 communications: email, surveys completed, and letters
- With over 4000 categories of comments



# Public Comments

- Issues receiving most interest included:
  - Predator-prey management
  - Wolf management
  - Recruitment, retention, and reactivation
  - Non-toxic ammunition
  - Hunter access
  - Wildlife conflict
  - Elk and deer
  - Bear and cougar



# Public Comment-Major Themes

## Predator-Prey Management

- Let nature takes its course, predators cannot over populate if they don't have the prey available
- The guidelines are too restrictive and would not result in any actions being taken
- You can't take humans out of the equation there are 7 million in this state, wildlife needs to be managed



# Public Comment-Major Themes

## Wolf Management

- Wolves are not game species and don't belong in the game management plan
- It is too early to be talking about a plan for managing wolves after they are de-listed;
- A plan for managing wolves after they reach recovery objectives should have been completed already
- Given the controversy associated with wolves, starting a plan now makes sense



# Public Comment-Major Themes

## Recruitment, Retention, and Re-activation

- Concerned that this is just a means to increase revenue to WDFW
- Lower the price of licenses and hunter numbers will increase
- Increase the number of nature watchers not hunters
- Find other ways to support the Department



# Public Comment-Major Themes

## Non-toxic Ammunition

- Eliminate lead ammunition now, it is toxic and kills or poisons wildlife
- Document problems before creating restrictions



# Public Comment-Major Themes

## Hunter Access

- By far the greatest concern was the fee access issues in western Washington associated with industrial timberlands
- There was a lot of support and suggestions for how to address the access issue



# Public Comment-Major Themes

## Wildlife Conflict

- The greatest concern was bear damage issues with industrial timberlands
- Again, there were many suggestions for how to improve the conflict program
- The use of non-lethal measures was popular



# Public Comment-Major Themes

## Elk and Deer

- Concern about predation effects was a common comment
- Improvement of surveys and population monitoring was also commonly stated
- Lots of comments related to hunting season regulations
- Hoof disease concerns



# Public Comment-Major Themes

## Cougar and Bear

- Again, concern about predator numbers and effects on prey was a common comment
- Support for considering prey population levels in managing predator population levels



# 2014 Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Responsive Management – Telephone Survey

- Hunting out of state & on public vs private lands
- WDFW Private Lands Programs
- Road Management Systems
- Game Mgmt Issues
  - Communication
  - Access to timberlands
  - ATV use for hunting



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

- Wolf Management
- Non-toxic Ammunition
- Hunter Recruitment
- Deer Hunting Issues
- Elk Hunting Issues
- Black bear & Cougar Hunting Issues



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

- Upland Bird
- Forest Grouse
- Turkey
- Waterfowl
- Bighorn Sheep, Mtn Goat, and Moose Hunting



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Where do Washington Residents Hunt

- Most Washington hunters have also hunted out of state (62%)
- Hunting on public lands exceeds hunting on private lands (74% of deer & 90% of elk hunters)
- Between 8 and 19% of hunters have utilized WDFW private lands access programs (1.2 million acres)



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Wildlife Management Strategies

- Communication about game mgmt activities (92%)
  - Publications (pamphlet)
  - WDFW Website
  - Email
  - Direct mail
- Controlling ATVs and Snowmobiles (over 69%)
- Public Access to Timberlands (over 77%)



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Wolf Management

- Hunters opinions on wolf recovery appears to have changed from 2007
- The majority of hunters oppose wolf recovery
- 76% of elk hunters oppose recovery and 53% of small game hunters
- The number one reason: Impacts to ungulates



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Lead Ammunition

- No consensus among hunters whether non-lead ammunition is important for the future of hunting:
  - 35% of deer hunters agree vs 44% disagree
  - 50% of small game hunters agree vs 38% disagree
- Deer and small game hunters supported incentives to voluntarily use non-lead ammunition
- Elk, cougar, and bear hunters opposed incentives



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Special Hunting Opportunities for Hunter Recruitment & Retention

- Support expressed for special opportunities for:
  - First time hunters 70%
  - Youth 88%
  - Seniors 91%
  - Hunters with disabilities 95%



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Deer Hunting Opportunity

- 74 % Satisfied with their deer hunting in Washington
  - **Reasons why hunters weren't more satisfied:**
    - Limited game
    - Limited harvest
    - Access
    - Restrictive regulations



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Deer Hunting Opportunity

- 53% rate the Department as good or excellent; 31% fair; and 12% poor
  - **Reasons for not rating higher:**
    - Restrictive regulations
    - Length & timing of seasons
    - Not enough game
- Some improvement from the 2007 survey: 50%; 24%; and 20%



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Deer Hunting Opportunity

- The majority of deer hunters say the season length is:
  - About right - 64%
  - Too short – 31%
  - Too long – 3%
- The majority of deer hunters oppose hunting over bait:
  - 59% oppose
  - 20% neutral
  - 21% support



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Elk Hunting Opportunity

- The majority of elk hunters are satisfied with their hunting experiences – 56%
- But a substantial number are not – 36%
- Reasons:
  - Not enough game
  - Access problems
  - Regulations
  - Crowding
  - Season length/timing



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Elk Hunting Opportunity

- The majority of elk hunters rated the Department as:
  - Excellent or good - 47%
  - Fair - 32%
  - Poor - 20%
- This rating has declined since 2007 from 54%; 30%; and 12% respectively



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Elk Hunting Opportunity

- About half of hunters say the season is about right and half say it's too short
- Opposition to hunting elk over bait:
  - 68 % oppose
  - 14% support



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Bear Hunting Opportunity

- Generally bear hunters are satisfied (68%) with their hunting opportunity
- They support spring seasons (84%)
- They support using hunters to address timber damage (82%)
- They favor incentives to increase harvest reporting, but also increasing penalties
- Most oppose mandatory carcass checks (51% oppose and 42% support)



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Cougar Hunting Opportunity

- Generally cougar hunters are satisfied (58%) with their hunting opportunity
- Overall, hunters do not support calling in to check on whether the quotas have been met and the season is still open; 52% oppose vs 43% support



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Pheasant Hunting Opportunity

- Eastern Wash pheasant hunters are mostly not satisfied with their hunting (52%)
- Their issues are:
  - Lack of game
  - Lack of access
  - Poor habitat
- 75% said release of pheasants is important



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Pheasant Hunting Opportunity

- Western Wash pheasant hunters are mostly satisfied with their hunting (66%)
- When asked about costs for managing the program:
  - There was little support for reducing the number of pheasants released (51% oppose)
  - There was more support for increasing the fee instead (57% support)



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Forest Grouse Hunting Opportunity

- Forest grouse hunters are satisfied with their hunting (74%)
- Forest grouse hunters hunt:
  - Intentionally for grouse (65%)
  - Incidental to other species (31%)
  - They like the current season length (78%)
  - They like the current season timing (82%)
  - A majority support separate bag limits (56%)
  - Road closures and restricted access have reduced participation (35% each)



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Game Bird Hunting Opportunity

- Quail hunters are mostly satisfied with their hunting (59%)
- 79% of turkey hunters are satisfied with their hunting opportunity
- 67% of waterfowl hunters are satisfied
- Lack of game is the most common reason stated for why they aren't more satisfied



# Hunter Opinion Survey Results

## Bighorn Sheep, Mountain Goat, & Moose Hunting Opportunity

- Would you prefer more permits but lower trophy quality:
  - 34% more permits
  - 20% fewer permits and higher quality
  - 41% no preference
- What method would be most supported to increase the odds of drawing:
  - 36% said no change
  - Allowing those with the most points to draw (16%)
  - Allowing those with higher points better odds (14%)
  - Give preference to 65 years and older (12%)



# Process to Finalize 2015-21 Game Management Plan

- Incorporate Major Remaining Comments
  - Predator/Prey Management
  - Wolf Management
  - Cougar Management
- Send out revised draft for final review mid-October
- Incorporate final comments November 21 – 30
- Brief the Wildlife Committee – December
- Bring final recommendation to Commission December 12 & 13

# Remaining Process 2015-17 Hunting Season Timeline

Web site Information: <http://wdfw.wa.gov/hunting/regulations/seasonsetting/>

- Scoping – June/July
- Public Involvement on major Issues and Alternatives - Aug to Sept 22
- Six Public Meetings – August 19 -28
- Tribal Coordination – August thru November
- Guidelines to Regions – October 31<sup>st</sup>
- Regional recommendations to HQ - Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>
- Recommendations to Commission filed late January
- Public Comment - February
- Commission Briefing and Hearing - March
- Commission Decision - April

# Questions?

